



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

Public Comment of ZERO TO THREE to the Census Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting

March 29, 2019

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My name is Amanda Perez, and I am here on behalf of Myra Jones Taylor, Chief Policy Officer of ZERO TO THREE. ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit whose mission is to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. For almost 40 years, ZERO TO THREE has translated the science of early childhood development into useful knowledge and strategies for parents, practitioners, and policymakers. The Census is a crucial data source for our work, but more importantly, it is a crucial tool for the allocation and availability of essential resources for very young children and their families across the country. In recognition of the importance of the Census to America's babies, ZERO TO THREE is a member of the leadership team of the Count All Kids Committee, the national complete count committee for young children.

We are writing to urge the Census Scientific Advisory Committee (CSAC) to address the challenges of the historic undercount of young children, and to urge Census Bureau staff to work with CSAC members to address some of these challenges.

While the Census coverage of adults has improved, the net undercount of young children has increased over time, with significant implications for infants, toddlers and families in the United States. The 2010 Census missed nearly one in ten children aged 0-4, or more than 2 million children. In 2010, young children had a higher net undercount than any other major demographic group, nearly 5% or almost one million children.

Even worse, the children that are missed most often are children of color. Thus, children who are already disproportionately poor and most in need of strong communities and services, are likely to get less than their fair share of federal and state dollars and adequate services in their communities.

The risk of a significant young child undercount in the 2020 Decennial Census is even greater now that millions of immigrant families are likely to be afraid to respond to the Census because it will include a question on citizenship. There is a higher percentage of young children living in households with one or more non-citizens (the group the Census Bureau says will have lower self-response rate because of the citizenship question) than any other age group -- and almost all of these young children are citizens.

If we are going to change this trajectory, we are going to have to do something different in the 2020 Census.



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We are pleased that the Census Bureau has chartered an official Task Force to specifically tackle the undercount of young children in the time remaining before the April 1, 2020 Count. This is a very positive step. We believe that members of the CSAC could assist the Census Bureau in identifying and undertaking additional steps to address the undercount. We would like to make a couple of suggestions related to the use of the CSAC scientists in addressing some critical issues related to the undercount of young children.

First, in the 2010 Census, the results of the Dual-Systems Estimate method (called Census Coverage Measurement - CCM in 2010) greatly underestimated the net undercount of young children. The net undercount for age 0 to 4 from Demographic Analysis (the method preferred by most demographers for young children) was 4.6 percent compared to only 0.7 percent from CCM. The problem with the CCM methodology is correlation bias where young children were missed both in the Census and in the Post-Enumeration Survey that was used to gauge coverage in the Census. We were happy to see this issue mentioned in version 4.0 of the 2020 Operation Plan, but to our knowledge, the Census Bureau has never brought this methodological/statistical problem to the CSAC for advice. **We believe members of the CSAC bring key expertise to help make sure that this problem is addressed in the 2020 Census, in accordance with the plan.**

Second, the Demographic Analysis (DA) program for the 2020 Census will produce subnational data on the net undercount of young children as part of the official DA release. It wasn't until 2018 that such figures were made available from the 2010 Census data, and even then, they were labeled experimental. **Having this data available in a more timely fashion would help advocates better understand and interpret the 2020 Census numbers, and would help researchers get a head start in even more effectively addressing the issue in the 2030 Census. Again, the scientists on the CSAC can play an essential role in advising the Census Bureau on the technical issues surrounding production of subnational estimates.**

Today's babies will be America's census takers and CSAC members of tomorrow. Let's use the tools of today to make sure they can be the innovators we will need them to be. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to comment.